THE CRISIS

After the ordeal comes the crisis of the seff in which the self suffers distortion through its becoming too egotistical (Rose Armiger in *The Other House),* or too deludedly altruistic (Fieda in *The Spoils of Poynton),* or too presumptuously over-critical (The Narrator in *The Sacred Fount)*, or too ineffectually influential (Nanda in *The Awkward Age).* In these novels, Henry James develops the tragic implications of the human personality deprived of the possibilities of true refine-ment, which deficiency brings about a destructive entropy of the whole self. James involves the human individuality in the naturalistic world of greed and lust, and dramatises the distracted shifts in the human personality from moral autonomy to spiritual perfidy, from selfhood to selfishness, from charity to tyranny, from participation to interference.[J] The distorted self enacts a climate of despotic egotism and moral corruption, obtruding and thwarting the processes and the possibilities of refinement, Negatively and ironically, James stresses the need for continuous self-knowledge as a means of that ultimate refinement of man's total sensibility which is at once fulfilment and redemption.

In *The Other House, The Spoils of Poynton, What Maisie Knew, The Awkward Age,* and *The Sacred Fount,* James considers the pitfalls of a selfhood without self-knowledge. In *The Other House,* a story about a rich banker by name Anthony Bream, James deals with the evils of a predatory egotism whhh is dangerously possessive. The handsome Tony Bream is sought to be possessed immorally by the lustful Rose Armiger. Tony has promised his dying wife that he would not marry again while their child, Effie, is alive. Rose Armiger is engaged to Peter Vidal, but is passionately in love with Tony. Mrs. Beever, a neighbour and a good friend of Tony, invites the young and innocent Jean Martle to live in her house, hoping that

her son Paul Beever would one day marry Jean. The pretty Jean is also drawn towards the handsome banker Tony, and his child Effie. The craving off the egomaniac Rose for self-gratification leads her to crime when circumstances conspire to thwart her intentions. The very existence of Effie is the first obstacle in her way, and Jean's admired presence »s a perpetual source of jealous irritation. The diabolic Rose murders the child and tries to foist the crime on innocent Jean. The murder U out, however, although sha is permitted to withdraw unpunished.